DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 368 206 FL 021 995

AUTHOR Lavadenz, Magaly C.
TITLE The Role of Paraprofessionals in the Instruction of Limited English Proficient Students.
PUB DATE 8 Feb 94
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Teachers; Case Studies; Classroom Techniques; Comparative Analysis; Elementary Education; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethnic Groups; Ethnography; *Limited English Speaking; Monolingualism; Occupational Aspiration; Second Language Instruction; Student Needs; Surveys; *Teacher Aides; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Motivation; *Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

A small-scale ethnographic study investigated: (1) the instructional role of the paraprofessional/teacher aide in dealing with the educational needs of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students; (2) to what extent the paraprofessional is aware of those needs; (3) whether ethnic or linguistic differences between paraprofessionals yield distinctive instructional strategies; and (4) the career goals of these individuals. The study was conducted over the course of three months in a suburban school district with a high proportion of LEP students. Twenty-two monolingual and bilingual teacher aides at 6 elementary schools responded to a survey concerning personal information (gender, ethnic and language background), education, working conditions, and instructional activities. Of the three case studies conducted, one was of a monolingual and two of bilingual teacher aides. Results suggest some ethnic differences among paraprofessionals in educational background, job satisfaction, perceptions of the emotional and political environment of the schools, and perceptions of student needs. Generally, these paraprofessionals are given responsibility for direct instruction of LEP students, with daily or weekly meetings with the regular classroom teacher. They see themselves as valued in LEP instruction. Improved training, inclusion in planning, and promotion of paraprofessionals are recommended. Contains two appendixes and six references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

FL

ED 368 206

The Role of Paraprofessionals in the Instruction of Limited English Proficient Students

by

Magaly C. Lavadenz, Ph.D.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Magaly C. Lavadenz
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Visiting Assistant Professor
Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, California
February 8, 1994

FL021995

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Role of Paraprofessionals in the Instruction of Limited English Proficient Students

Introduction

The ever-increasing numbers of limited English speaking students and the relative shortage of qualified and credentialed bilingual teachers have prompted the California State Department of Education and local Boards of Education to search for alternatives in meeting the educational needs of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Olsen and Chen, 1988). While not diminishing state and local efforts to train and recruit credentialed bilingual teaching personnel from a variety of sources, a functional alternative has been to hire teaching assistants or paraprofessionals who are proficient in English as well as one of the major languages represented in our Limited English Proficient (LEP) school population. For purposes of this study, the terms paraprofessional and teaching assistant are used interchangeably.

The responsibility for establishing hiring criteria and training for teaching assistants is relegated to the local school district (California State Department of Education, 1984). There is great variety at both the district level and at the site level, in critical factors involving teaching assistants. These factors which define the role of bilingual and non-bilingual teaching assistants include: a)use of the non-English language; b) the working relationship between the teaching assistant and the classroom teacher(s); c) the instructional responsibilities of the teaching assistant; d) the evaluation of the effectiveness of the assistant; and e) the career aspirations of the assistant, particularly the career goal of becoming credentialed teacher. These role-factors are also addressed in this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors which define the role of the teaching assistant or paraprofessional, as described above, given the practical reality of the school environment. More specifically, in light of the importance and the contributions of the paraprofessional to the education of the LEP population in the schools, this investigation seeks to describe how the role definitions for paraprofessionals are executed on a daily basis. A model representing the observed instructional characteritics will be developed. In addition to these issues, the personal characteristics of teaching assistants are addressed, including linguistic and ethnic differences, educational backgrounds, reasons for being assistants.

This study represents a descriptive report of the actual daily instructional experiences of teaching assistants, acquired through the ethnographic methods of interview data and participant observation, along with the analysis of questionnaire responses. It was conducted over the course of three months, in a suburban Los Angeles school district with 27,000 students, 65% of whom are limited English speaking. Twenty-two mono-lingual and bilingual teaching assistants at six elementary schools responded to the Paraprofessional Questionnaire (Appendix A). Responses were analyzed qualitatively and are discussed in the Methodology section.

Review of the Literature

There is currently very little in the way of professional literature directed at documenting what teaching assistants do, and much less of that sparse literature which addresses the effectiveness of paraprofessionals. Barron (1980) conducted a study of the classroom performance and attitudes concerning bilingual teacher assistants. He concluded that assistants "receive little educational guidance or direction from teachers or administrators" and that they "remain in secondary status position" (p.51).

Barron also stated that professional organizations do not "reach out" to address the needs of the bilingual paraprofessionals in instructional settings. Although this issue has changed since Barron conducted his study, due the direction of CABE (California Association of Bilingual Education), many of the findings presented by Barron in 1980 are still relevant today. A current concern is the issue of relative lack of training for teaching assistants. Whether the classroom assignment is in a bilingual setting, or outside the classroom in a 'pull-out' program for ESL, classroom assistants receive training that usually consists of one-time or short-terms workshops. These findings were consistent with responses given in the current study.

Additionally, Barron also found that assistants were also expected to serve as resources for parents and the community, although he concluded that negativity towards bilingual assistants was also extended to the parents with whom they (the assistants) were supposed to network.

It appears that intensive efforts to provide rigorous and consistent training for paraprofessionals can lead to significantly improved achievement in primary language reading scores, English language arts and mathematics for Chinese and Hispanic elementary school students (Cabrera, 1988). This study was funded both at the federal level and the local (New York City) level and also served to provide bilingual paraprofessionals with formal teacher training. It was an extension of the initial 1984 (Fernandez and Shulman), which reported similar findings for only Spanish-speaking students through the intensive training of paraprofessionals for direct instruction of historically low-achieving minorities in New York public schools. The emphasis in both studies was the use of the primary language to build literacy skills which were transferable to English, while promoting competency in oral English and mathematics.

In a separate, but related study, Goldenback (1985) investigated the career aspirations of paraprofessionals in New York City. He found that those assistants whose careers goal were directed towards teaching were about 10 years younger and had about 3 years less seniority than those paraprofessionals who did not plan to pursue teaching careers. He also stated that a major reason for choosing teaching as a profession was the "satisfaction of helping children" and the opportunity to receive school credits for working as teacher assistants. These findings were very congruent with responses received for the current study (to be described in the Methodology section). Negative comments from Goldenback's surveys tended to be in the area of being perceived by teachers and administrators as "second class citizens."

Miramontes (1990) clarifies the challenges faced by school districts and personnel in designing program needs for linguistically diverse student populations, and specifically for exceptional students. She calls improved collaboration between certificated personnel and bilingual paraprofessionals in special education, with the goal of working as a team. Improved collaboration is defined in terms of certificated personnel taking ownership of responsibility for instruction of this population.

Miramontes views the bilingual paraprofessional as the link between the school and the knowledge base of the linguistically diverse exceptional child. Her recommendations are applicable to teaching assistants working with mainstream as well as special education students.

Methodology

The basic question that is addressed by this study is: What is the instructional role of the teaching assistant in dealing with the educational needs of LEP students? and to what extent is the paraprofessional aware of those differential needs? Subsidiary questions are: Do ethnic and linguistic differences between paraprofessionals yield distinctive instructional strategies? and What are the career goals of teaching assistants?

The study was conducted over the course of three months, in a suburban Los Angeles school district which has a student population of which 65% is LEP. The six elementary school sites that were the source of data were accessible to the author through my current position as the itinerant Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher Specialist. These five schools, whose LEP populations range from 25% to 50% , provide ESL (English as a Second Language) primarily through instructional assistants. The sixth school site, which has a population of approximately 90% LEP, was the location of my recently vacated position of Spanish-bilingual first grade teacher. Teacher assistants here provided primary language support as well as ESL. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from each site administrator.

A 45-item paraprofessional questionnaire was developed which surveyed four areas: personal information, education, working conditions and instructional activities. The first

section examined personal information including ethnicity, linguistic proficiencies. The second section addressed the paraprofessional's educational background. The section on working conditions included number of hours worked daily and number of students seen daily. The final section surveyed instructional activities and responsibilities, which included the classroom setting, the nature of instruction (whether it was ESL or primary language support), a rating of average job satisfaction and finally open-ended questions related to general educational concerns. A summary of the responses, which includes the survey questions, is seen in Appendix A.

Thirty-eight questionnaires were distributed, twenty-two of which were returned. The questionnaire was also translated into Spanish; Spanish-speaking teaching assistants were given the option of responding in either language. 5 (or 22.7%) of the 22 completed questionnaires were in Spanish. The findings from the survey are discussed in the next section.

In addition to the survey, three case studies were selected for analysis. These case studies represent three different instructional settings and role definitions for teaching assistants that served as the basis for development of the model (Appendix B). The setting included (1) a bilingual teacher assistant, Irma, has been at the same school site for 16 years and is assigned to a Spanish bilingual classroom; (2) a bilingual teacher assistant, Marcia, has been with the school district for 23 years and is assigned to do ESL for 57 students in a pull-out program; and (3) Veronica, a mono-lingual assistant who has worked with the same school for three years and is currently enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a local university.

Analysis of Questionnaire Responses

Part I: Personal Information

This section provides analysis of the first part of the questionnaire, which surveys personal information of teaching assistants in this study. The average age of respondents was 40.4, with a range from 23 to 56. Respondents were overwhelmingly female (95.5% to 4.5% male), married (81.8% to 13.6% single) and had an average of two children. The high percentage of teaching assistant with children over the age of 18 (45.%) is consistent with the average age and seniority of the respondents.

Figure 1 (below) represents the breakdown by number of responses of the ethicity of teaching assistants. More than one answer was permitted to allow for mixed parentage. One ethnic

	White	Black or African American	Asian, Asian American, or	Mexican, Mexican American	Chicano/a	Central, South or Latin A	Other	No Answer	Total
Ethnicity	12	0	2	2	0	5	3	0	*

Note: * Multiple answers allowed.

Figure 1. Ethnicity

group that should have been included in this section was Middle-Eastern. Some of the respondents who marked more than one selection either wrote in this ethnic group or selected White as well as Other. From the sample represented in this study, the responses show that 54% of the teaching assistants classified themselves as White (this included 2 Middle Easterners); 23% were Latin American; 9% were Mexican American; 9% were Asian and Pacific Islanders; and 13.6% classified themselves as Other, which also included Middle Easterners.

	Languages Spoken
English	95.5
Spanish	27.3
Armenian	13.6
Korean	0.0
Tagalog	4.5
Other	13.6
No Answer	0.0
Total	
Number of Forms	22

Note: * Multiple answers allowed.

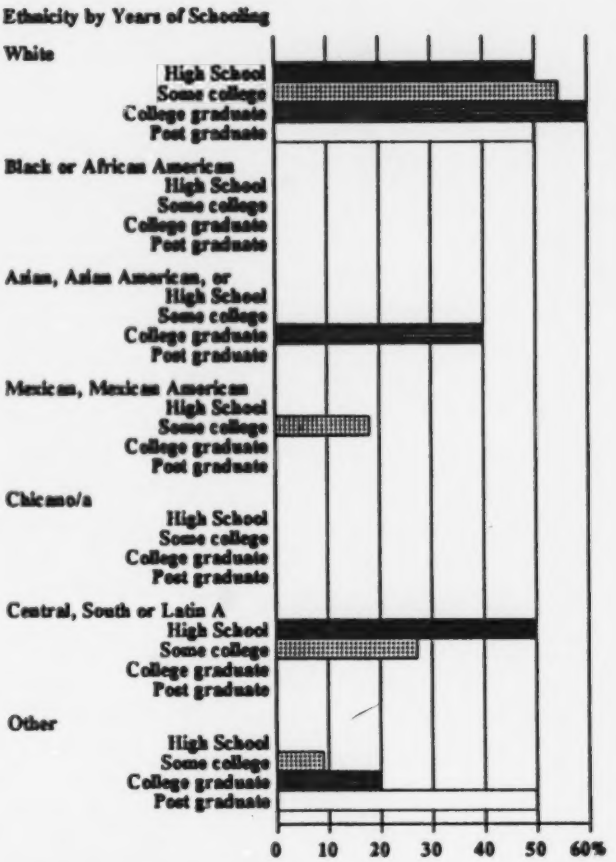
Figure 2

Figure 2 (right) describes the languages spoken by the assistants surveyed. Questionnaire results indicate that of the respondents who speak languages other than English, all are literate in their primary language.

Part II: Education

This section of the questionnaire sought to examine the educational backgrounds of teaching assistants surveyed, including highest level of education completed, where schooling was completed and future career goals of the respondents. It is interesting to note that over 70% of teaching assistants had either taken some college level courses (50%) or had graduatede from college (22.7%).Almost 41% or respondents had completed their coursework in their-country of origin. Figure 3 (right) shows the percentages of years of schooling according to ethnic group.

This graph indicates that increased years of schooling was more common for assistants classifying themselves as white (including Middle Easterners)than for other assistants representative of Mexican American or Latin American ethnic groups.



Note: Percentages on 22 replies.

Figure 3

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 4 illustrates the survey questions that examine career aspirations of teaching assistants. It appears that, of the 6 assistants who plan to pursue teaching careers, most are White. In light of the fact that para-professionals are a potential pool of bilingual teacher candidates, it seems that, from the data compiled in this study, minority teaching assistants are not pursuing teaching careers. It is possible to surmise, however, that this analysis is compatible with the findings in the Goldenback study (1985). He found that both monolingual and bilingual teaching aspirants, as a group, were on average 10 years younger than those paraprofessionals who did not aspire to teach. While there are ethnic differences in career goals, further analysis should be conducted to determine whether age alone is a factor, or whether differences are attributable to ethnicity alone.

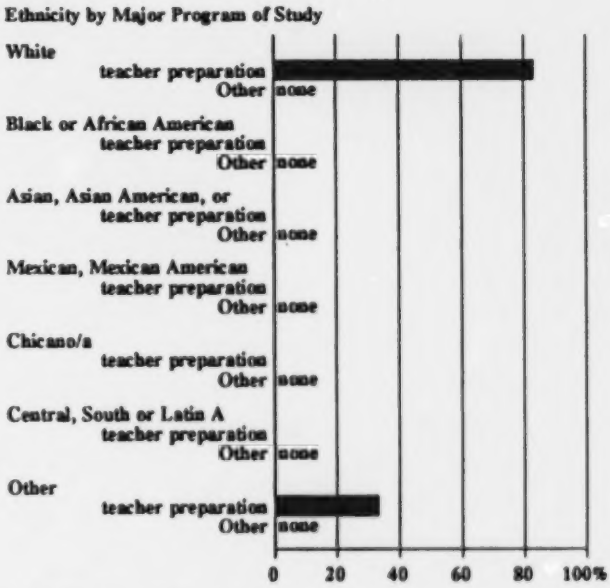


Figure 4

For the paraprofessional who are currently enrolled, or who wish to pursue teaching careers, the major obstacles to completing the credential process were identified as financial and passing CBEST.

Part III: Working Conditions

The range of children seen daily by teaching assistant was from 4 to 90, with an average of about 30. Figures 5 and 6 (below) describe the average number of children instructed daily and the average number of hours worked. Most assistants in this district work 6 or less hours, due partly to the length of the school day (children are at school for approximately 7 hours daily), and partly due to the expense of medical benefits which increase as the number of hours worked daily increase.

	Children Daily Seen
Students seen daily	30.67
Number of Forms	22

Figure 5. Average Number of Children seen by teacher assistants daily

	Daily hours
0 to 2	0.0
3 to 6	90.9
7 to 8	4.5
No Answer	4.5
total	100.0
Number of Forms	22

Figure 6

Part IV: Instructional Activities

This portion of the questionnaire obtained information which encompass a variety of activities performed daily by teaching assistants. The information was also verified through observations for the case studies. Questions pertaining to language usage in instruction, type of instruction given by assistants, participation in school-site committees, the native languages of the students instructed by the assistants, and job satisfaction were included in this section.

Figure 7 (right) indicates the variety of language groups present in the six schools that were included in this study. Spanish, Armenian, and Korean are the three major language groups, although many more languages are represented district-wide.

	Languages of Students
English	90.9
Spanish	77.3
Armenian	63.6
Korean	54.5
Tagalog	0.0
Other	4.5
No Answer	0.0
Total	*
Number of Forms	22

Note: * Multiple answers allowed.

Figure 7. Percentages of Linguistic Backgrounds of Students Instructed by Teaching Assistants

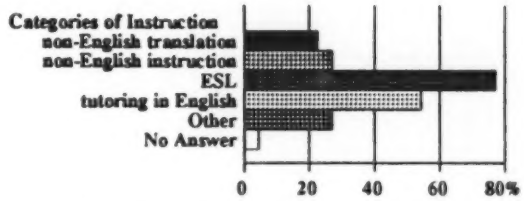
Teacher assistants provide various types of instruction for LEP students (see Figures 8 and 9, right). Paraprofessionals sampled for this study were aware of the linguistic differences (thus they were able to correctly identify the languages spoken by the students they serve).

	Languages of Instruction
English	90.0
Spanish	25.0
Armenian	15.0
Korean	0.0
Tagalog	0.0
Other	10.0
Total	*
Number of Replies	20

Note: * Multiple answers allowed.

Figure 8

Most assistants work with mixed language groups in a variety of classrooms. Figure 10 (next page) represents the type of instruction provided for LEP students by teaching assistants. It is obvious that ESL (77.3%) is the primary instructional role of assistants. Tutoring in Math, Science, Social Studies (54.5%), translation (27.3%), and primary language support in literacy instruction (27.3) were also reported.. In addition to these, assistants perform a variety of clerical jobs, including running dittos, making copies, and general preparatory work for teachers.



Note: Percentages on 22 forms.

Figure 9

Teaching assistants responded that they provide one or more of these services for language minority students, although

only 40.9% answered that they use a language other than English. The extent of use of the non-English language also included translation. Only 14.3% of teaching assistants replied that they are assigned to a bilingual classroom. Of the 14.3%, 4.5% indicated that the teacher is bilingual, the difference being that in the remaining classrooms, the assistant is responsible for primary language support. Those assistant who responded that they were assigned to a bilingual classroom, the language other than English was either Spanish or Armenian. Figure 11 (below) indicates the use of the major non-English languages by subject area. This table analyzes answers according to the number of questionnaire respondents (for example, of the 6 Spanish-speaking assistants, 33.3% answered that they teach reading in the primary language, 16.7% indicated that they teach Math, and so on).

	Bilingual Setting
No	76.2
Yes – students speak predominantly a language other than English	14.3
Yes – teacher is bilingual	4.8
Yes – assistant is responsible	9.5
Total	*
Number of Replies	21

Note: * Multiple answers allowed.

Figure 10

None of the assistants who responded to this questionnaire was involved in literacy instruction for Armenian or Korean (although literacy instruction in Armenian is taught at one of the schools in this study, questionnaire responses were not returned from those particular assistants for purposes of analysis).

The degree of participation on school-based decision-making committees was also one of the focuses of this study. Figure 12 illustrates that the majority of teaching assistants (81.8) are not represented on these type of committees. The respondents who participate in committees (13.6%) serve (or served in the past) on District Bilingual Advisory Committeees, LEP committees or other site committees.

Participation in school-site committees by whites seems to be more prevalent than by other ethnic groups (Figure 13).

	Non-English Subject Areas							
Languages Spoken	Reading	Math	Science	Social Studies	Other	No Answer	Total	Number of Forms
English	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	4.8	81.0	*	21
Spanish	33.3	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	50.0	*	6
Armenian	0.0	33.3	33.3	33.3	0.0	66.7	*	3
Korean	–	–	–	–	–	–	*	0
Tagalog	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	*	1
Other	0.0	33.3	33.3	33.3	0.0	66.7	*	3
No Answer	–	–	–	–	–	–	*	0
Overall	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	4.5	81.8	*	22

Figure 11

As indicated by responses, most teaching assistants have received limited training and/or staff development. 14 of paraprofessionals surveyed who had attended training, received it in the area of ESL in-servicing. Barron (1980) had similar findings in his investigation into the role of teaching assistants.

	Site-Based Committees
Yes	13.6
No	81.8
No Answer	4.5
Total	100.0
Number of Forms	22

Figure 12

Over 50% of the assistants who responded rated their job satisfaction rate as "Excellent"(Figure 14).

Figure 15 (next page) furnishes the responses to the job satisfaction rate according to ethnicity. It appears that responses that represent less than excellent ratings were given by assistants from non-white ethnic groups. Responses to the open-ended questions about concerns that assistants have in their instructional settings suggest that some not quite "legitimate" work conditions (those outside of the regular classrooms and/or in hallways, etc.) and being given more responsibility than they feel assistants should have, may contribute and influence job satisfaction ratings.

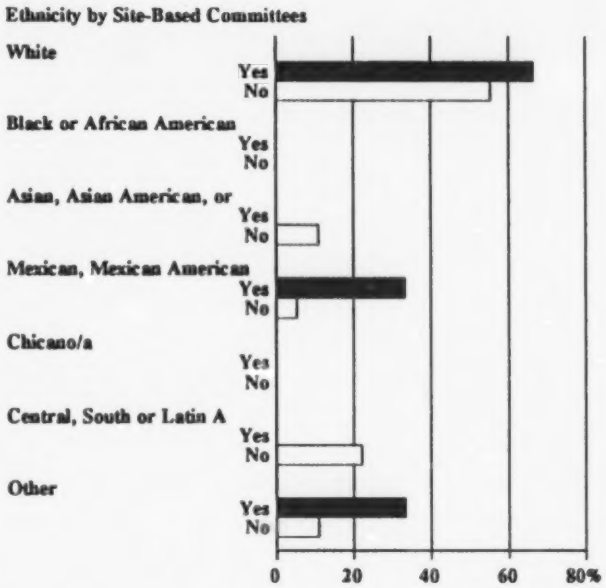


Figure 13. Participation on School-Site committees by ethnic group

Finally, Figure 16 (next page) demonstrates reasons for being teaching assistants. As indicated in Baron (1980) and Goldenback (1985), the majority of teaching assistants do so because they love to work with children and, according to comments on the questionnaire, receive positive feedback from their supervising teachers. Respondents also indicated that they choose to be teaching assistants because of the convenient hours and vacations that are compatible with their childrens' schedules. Many respondents

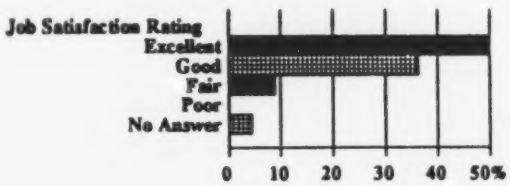


Figure 14

	Ethnicity								
Job Satisfaction Rating	White	Black or African American	Asian, Asian American, or	Mexican, Mexican American	Chicano/a	Central, South or Latin A.	Other	Total	Number of Replies
Excellent	72.7	0.0	9.1	9.1	0.0	9.1	9.1	*	11
Good	25.0	0.0	12.5	12.5	0.0	37.5	12.5	*	8
Fair	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	*	2
Poor	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	*	0
Overall	57.1	0.0	9.5	9.5	0.0	19.0	14.3	*	21

Note: * Multiple answers allowed.

Figure 15

	love to work with children	convenient hours; please	want to become a teacher	Other	No Answer	Total	Number of Forms
Reason for being a T.A.	81.8	27.3	40.9	18.2	4.5	*	22

Note: * Multiple answers allowed.

Figure 16

report that they meet frequently (daily or weekly) with their teachers to discuss instructional plans.

The responses to the questionnaire provided general information on the personal characteristics and the instructional activities of the teaching assistants who took part in this study. A more descriptive account of the intructional roles of teaching assistants follows in the case study summaries.

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Irma (all assistants were given pseudonyms) is a Cuban-born Spanish bilingual teaching assistant who is assigned to one classroom which provides bilingual instruction for 31 first graders. She has been with the district for approximately 16 years and has witnessed the increasing numbers of LEP students, particularly Armenian and Hispanic. The elementary school where she works is the largest in the district, with an enrollment of 1540.

Irma is in her late 40's and has no plans to pursue teaching. She feels that teaching is too great a responsibility and is content in her role as an assistant.

Irma was observed during the Language Arts instructional time block and during tutorial sessions in the afternoons, when she helped small groups of students in remedial work in reading and math. While Irma was in the classroom, she worked in small groups and used

the Spanish basal reading program. During the tutoring sessions, she worked in a resource room with children from various classrooms.

Irma's role in this classroom during the observed Language Arts times seems to be a parallel one to the teacher; that is, both she and the bilingual teacher were providing reading instruction to small groups. She is a strong advocate of bilingual education and stated that she feels that the program should be strengthened by making it more consistent across grade levels.

Her main concerns in her instructional setting was that she feels that Hispanic students should be trained more rigourously in work and study habits so that they will be able to have more success when they transition to English. She also stated that Hispanic parents should be encouraged by the school to be more vocal about their concerns for their children. She reports that many of the parents she comes into contact with are intimidated by the school staff and will not come forward to defend their childrens' rights. When questioned about how she would remedy this, she said that the school should learn more respect for the home culture of the students.

It is apparant that Irma is conscious of more than just the instruction that occurs in her school. Her concerns for the political and social aspects of working with students from linguistic minorities indicate that she is aware of more than just the surface level of the education of LEP students. Irma is also aware of class differences of the students that she works with. One of the reasons that she says she is so much in favor of bilingual education is because students are also to value the culture from which they come. She feels that because many students she works with come from working class home, parents are often not available to promote cultural and linguistic pride She has a deep respect for the teacher that she works with, and perceives herself as part of a team with the teacher.

Case Study 2

Veronica is an anglo, 25 year old teaching assistant in a small school (443 students) whose LEP population is approximately 25% LEP, and has worked at this school for the past three years. She is currently enrolled at Cal State Los Angeles in the teacher preparation program and will be ready to begin her student teaching in the Spring of 1992. She reports that working as a teacher assistant has helped her get ideas about what to do with LEP students and how to run a classroom.

The main language group represented in this school is Korean. Other language groups are presents in smaller proportions. There is no bilingual program at Annette's school, therefore the main strategy for working with LEP students is separate ESL in a pull-out program. The assistants at this school are responsible for working with ESL students in small groups, according to their oral English language development.

Veronica is assigned to work with ESL students from 6 classrooms in this pull-out program, with an emphasis on English vocabulary development through the IDEA kit an various other methods, including the Language Experience Approach (LEA). For those students who have more advanced oral English skills, yet are still LEP, Veronica is responsible for providing reading instruction in the District recommended Transitional Reading series.

Veronica's main concerns are centered around the limitations of time allotted for working with LEP students. She feels that teachers are sometimes overwhelmed by having too many children in their classrooms and that they "sometimes don't give these students the attention they need." Veronica also expressed concerns for the emotional well-being of LEP students. She related the story of one of the students she works with, Felicia, who gets very nervous and tense when she has to give oral book reports in English. She would like to know how to help the students that she works with feel more comfortable.

In this particular case, the teaching assistant states concerns about the responsibility classroom teachers hold towards LEP students. Given the relative lower numbers of LEP students represented in this school, and given that a large percentage of them are Korean immigrants from higher socio-economic levels, Veronica seems to expresses concerns for those LEP students who do not achieve as highly, like Felicia. Veronica instructional responsibilities are somewhat independent of the general instruction
going on in the classroom. She plans and does most of the teaching of LEP students outside of the regular classroom.

Veronica is also representative of teaching assistants who aspire to teaching careers, both in this study (through data in the survey) and
in the literature cited which notes that teaching aspirants are usually younger and have less seniority.

Case Study 3

Nancy has worked for the district for 23 years, 12 of those at the school where she presently works. She identifies herself as a " 50-ish" Mexican-American and speaks Spanish fluently, although she states that her mother was Lebanese. She works as an assistant in a school with an enrollment of approximately 420 students, of which 142 are LEP. The majority language group at this school is Spanish, followed closely by Armenian and Korean. There is no bilingual program at this school.

Up until four weeks ago, when an additional teacher assistant was hired, Nancy has been solely responsible for planning, assessing and implementing ESL instruction for 57 of the most limited LEP students. According to Nancy, when a teacher perceives that a student is experiencing difficulty in a concept or content area, the teacher indicates so to Nancy and then she proceeds with the instruction she feels is necessary. Nancy also tutors in other content areas, such as Math, Social Studies and Science, and provides translation only when

necessary. She says she does not feel comfortable using "too much Spanish because the teachers pass by and hear her and then ask why they are not talking in English."

During two interviews with Nancy, I found out that she is not only knowledgeable about the academic needs of the students she works with, she is also aware of their personal needs in terms of food, clothing and any family problems children may be experiencing. She serves as the Spanish translator for teachers and parents, almost to the extent of a community liaison. Nancy works beyond the hours for which she is paid, making home visits and paying less affluent children to do odd jobs around her house (she lives in the neighborhood). She states that she feels accountable for each of the students that she is responsible and spends money out of her own pocket to purchase materials for intruction.

During observations of small group instruction led by Nancy (conducted in a large hallway), Nancy demonstrated a great deal of warmth for her students, as evidenced by her use of praise and encouragement. She teaches students from all language backgrounds and is very insistent on rules of appropriate behavior during group time. On one occasion, Nancy had two groups at the same time, each having separate assignments, yet managed very adequately.

Nancy represents the best of qualities of paraprofessionals demonstrate. She has a high degree of commitment both to the educational and general well-being of LEP students. She stated that "when she leaves this world, I want to leave a mark" and she feels that she is in the right place as far as career placement is concerned. Although this could be interpreted by some as a type of missionary zeal, I would disagree; Nancy is there for the children. To a certain extent, the teachers at this school appear to take advantage of this situation and relegate their responsibilities for the instruction of LEP students to Nancy; after all, she does a very good job.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The responses to the questionnaire and the case studies provide a balanced insight into the role of paraprofessionals in the instruction of LEP students. Although somewhat limited by the sample available for this study, results appear to be consistent with the literature that exists, as documented by responses to career goals and participation in staff development. Ethnic differences in relation to years of schooling were made apparant through the data obtained in the survey (less years of schooling for ethnic paraprofessionals). These differences surface again in the satisfaction rating by assistants, perhaps in connection with a higher degree of perception of the differential attitudes on the part of teachers and schools towards LEP students.

Interview data suggest that paraprofessionals who themselves are ethnic minorities are more aware of the political and social boundaries for LEP students that exist in public schools.

This was noted in the responses on the use of non-English languages in the survey and in Nancy's statements regarding teachers questioning her use of Spanish.

This information seems to imply that there is a different level of consciousness on the part of minority paraprofessionals concerning the needs of LEP students: while non-minority teaching assistants are concerned about the emotional well-being and general instructional needs of LEP students, minority paraprofessionals appear to observe the sometimes "laissez-faire" teacher attitudes towards these students.

Generally, teaching assistants assume the responsibility for direct instruction of ESL for LEP students, which is relegated to them by teachers.
Although data from the questionnaire indicates that assistants meet with supervising teachers weekly or daily, it cannot be assumed that these meetings are planning meetings. At least some meetings are for the purposes of discussing student progress, as evaluated by the assistant.

Both teachers (through formal yearly evaluations of paraprofessionals) and teaching assistants (through responses to questions concerning how they perceive that teachers value their contributions) realize the importance of the latter in the instruction of LEP students.

The principal recommendations that proceed from the responses in this study include: the need for greater participation in school-site committees on the part of teaching assistants, particularly bilingual committees which address the needs of LEP students; the development of on-going in-services and training; the commitment on the part of district administration to recognize the contributions of paraprofessionals in the instruction of LEP students; the active recruitment of exemplary bilingual paraprofessionals for teacher credentialing on the part of state and local educational agencies.

In conclusion, local, state and national increases in immigration of non-English speaking school-aged children necesitate measures to augment teacher resources. As a potential source, paraprofessional have been largely ignored by educational agencies. While few districts provide incentives for bilingual paraprofessional to pursue teaching careers, assistants are employed as intermediary measures in meeting the needs of LEP students. This study demonstrates a small sampling of the range of instructional roles performed by teaching assistants. Further research endeavors in this area are needed.

References

Barron, Jose. (1980). *Issues in Bilingual Education Affecting Performance Needs of Teacher Aides with Implications for Teacher Training Programs*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Southern California.

Cabrera, Eulalia et al. (1988). *Bilingual Pupil Services, 1986-1987. OEA Evaluation Report.* ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED 298788.

California State Department of Education. (1984). Bilingual-Crosscultural Teacher Aides: A Resource Guide. Sacramento, California.

Goldenback, Gary. (1985). Teaching Career Aspirations of Monolingual and Bilingual Parprofessionals in the New York City School System. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Hofstra University, New York.

Miramontes, Ofelia B. (1990). *Organizing for Effective Paraprofessional Services in Special Education: A Multilingual/Multiethnic Instructional Service Team Model.* Journal of Remedial and Special Education, 12; 29-37.

Olsen, Laurie and Chen, Marcia. (1988). Crossing the Schoolhouse Border: Immigrant Students and the California Public Schools. A California Tomorrow Research Report. San Francisco, California.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF ALL 22 FORMS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine the role of the teaching assistant or paraprofessional in the public school setting. Please complete and return as soon as possible. All responses will remain confidential.

Personal information

(1) What is your age?

Average 40.4, Low 23.0, High 56.0 for 21 replies.

(2) What is your sex?

4.5% male 95.5% female 0.0% No Answer
The average response was 2.0.

(3) In what country were you born?

54.5% U.S. 18.2% Central America, specify_____ 0.0% Spain 0.0% No Answer
36.4% Other 0.0% South America, specify_____
4.5% Mexico
More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Honduras ... Costa Rica ... cuba ... Iran ... Armenia ... Lebanon ... Phillipines ... Hong Kong

(4) To what ethnic or national group do you belong?

54.5% White 9.1% Mexican, Mexican American, 0.0% Chicano/a
22.7% Central, South or Latin American 9.1% Asian, Asian American, or Pacific 0.0% Black or African American
13.6% Other Islander 0.0% No Answer
More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Armenian ... Middle Eastern White ... Lebanese mother

(5) What is your marital status?

81.8% Married 13.6% Single 4.5% Divorced 0.0% Widowed 0.0% No Answer

(6) How many children do you have?

Average 2, Low 0, High 4 for 22 replies.

(7) What is/are the age(s) of your child/ren?

45.5% over 18 27.3% 13 to 18 4.5% 0 to 2
31.8% 6 to 12 9.1% 3 to 5 18.2% No Answer
More than one answer accepted.

(8) What language(s) do you speak?

95.5% English 13.6% Armenian 4.5% Tagalog 0.0% No Answer
27.3% Spanish 13.6% Other 0.0% Korean
More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Farsi ... Arabic, French and Turkish ... Chinese

(9) What language or languages did you learn to speak before you started school?

63.6% English 9.1% Armenian 4.5% Tagalog 0.0% No Answer
22.7% Spanish 9.1% Other 0.0% Korean
More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Arabic ... Chinese

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(10) What language did you first learn to read and write?

59.1% English	13.6% Armenian	4.5% Tagalog	0.0% No Answer
22.7% Spanish	4.5% Other	0.0% Korean	

More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Chinese

Education

(11) How many years of schooling have you completed?

50.0% Some college	18.2% High School	0.0% No Answer
22.7% College graduate	9.1% Post graduate	

(12) Schooling was completed

68.2% in the United States	40.9% in the country of origin	0.0% No Answer

More than one answer accepted.

(13) If you completed a degree in your country of origin, please indicate in which field of study the degree was completed:

1 ... Civil Engineer-Mathematics ... Philosophy and Letters ... BS in Biology ... BA ... BS in Education; Masters in History ... Child development

(14) Are you currently enrolled in classes?

22.7% Yes	72.7% No	4.5% No Answer

The average response was 1.8.

(15) If yes, please indicate which type (if no, go to question 20):

13.6% graduate school	4.5% community college	0.0% English as a Second Language
9.1% four year college	0.0% adult education	72.7% No Answer

(16) If you are enrolled in college courses, please indicate how many semester units:

18.2% 7-9 (12 to 15 quarter units)	0.0% 4-6 (6 to 10 quarter units)	72.7% No Answer
4.5% 12-15 (20 to 23 quarter units)	0.0% 0-3 (0 to 6 quarter units)	
4.5% 10-12 (16 to 20 quarter units)	0.0% over 16 (over 25 quarter units)	

(17) If you are enrolled in a college or university, please indicate if you receive financial aid:

0.0% Yes	27.3% No	72.7% No Answer

The average response was 2.0.

(18) If you receive financial aid, please indicate which type:

No replies to this question.

No written replies.

(19) If you are enrolled in college, please indicate what is your major program of study:

27.3% teacher preparation	0.0% Other	72.7% No Answer

No written replies.

(20) If you are currently enrolled in a teacher preparation program, approximately how long would you estimate you will complete the program?

Average 1.7, Low 1.0, High 3.0 for 5 replies.

(21) To what extent, if any, do you feel your experience as a teaching assistant influenced your decision to pursue a teaching career?

70% influenced my decision ... gave me hands on experience ... Greatly, everyday I feel more challenged to pursue teaching. ... It helped me pinpoint my abilities and what I'm capable of. ... great extent ... Extremely! The teachers at VW have encouraged me greatly--loaning me materials, offering suggestions and encouragement. ... some

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(22) What obstacles do you perceive to your goal of becoming a teacher?

do not have the funds to finish ... taking the classes ... Passing CBEST ... stuttering ... Financial-this quarter I dropped a class because I could'nt afford to buy the $60 required textbook. ... none

(23) Have you ever taken a course to learn how to speak and understand English as a second language?

31.8% Yes 63.6% No 4.5% No Answer
The average response was 1.7.

(24) Have you ever taken a course to learn how to read and write English as a second language?

31.8% Yes 63.6% No 4.5% No Answer
The average response was 1.7.

(25) Have you participated in any staff development/training at your school or district? If yes, please indicate which type:

[5] no ... [2] ESL inservices ... occasionally ... Paraprofessional conference ... LASI and LASII training ... kindergarten preparation ... Title VII ... ESL workshops ... Paraprofessional Conference, First Aid and CPR ... at the Child Development Center ... ESL ... Paraprofessional workshops ... none

Current Working Conditions

(26) What is your job site/location?

[8] Mann ... [4] Verdugo Woodlands ... [3] Linclon ... [2] Dunsmore ... [2] Fremont ... Lincoln and La Crescenta ... Lincoln

(27) What grade level(s) do you teach?

[3] K-6 ... [2] 1-6 ... 1,3,4 ... 3 and 4 ... 3,5,6 ... 1st ... k, 2nd, 5th ... 3rd and 4th ... 1-3 ... Special Ed. K-6 ... K, 4th and 5th ... 3rd ... 5th and 6th ... 6 ... k-4 ... 3rd and 5th ... 1,2,5

(28) How many students do you work with on a daily basis?

Average 30.7, Low 4.0, High 90.0 for 21 replies.

(29) How many hours do you work on a daily basis?

90.9% 3 to 6 4.5% 7 to 8 0.0% 0 to 2 4.5% No Answer

Instructional Activities

(30) Do you teach primarily:

86.4% small group
36.4% individual (one-to-one) with students
18.2% whole class
4.5% Other
4.5% No Answer
More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: administers LAS

(31) Are you in a bilingual classroom?

72.7% No
13.6% Yes - students speak predominantly one language other than English:
9.1% Yes - assistant is reponsible for non-English language support:
4.5% Yes - teacher is bilingual and instruction is in 2 languages:
4.5% No Answer
More than one answer accepted.

(32) If students speak another language , please indicate what language(s):

90.9% English 63.6% Armenian 4.5% Other 0.0% No Answer
77.3% Spanish 54.5% Korean 0.0% Tagalog
More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Arabic

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(33) If the teacher is bilingual, please indicate the languages spoken:

9.1% Armenian	4.5% English	0.0% Tagalog	86.4% No Answer
4.5% Spanish	4.5% Korean	0.0% Other	

More than one answer accepted.

No written replies.

(34) What subject areas do you teach in the non-English language?

9.1% Reading	9.1% Science	4.5% Other
9.1% Math	9.1% Social Studies	81.8% No Answer

More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: only instructions are given in Spanish

(35) What is your classroom assignment?

54.5% in various classrooms, with various teachers(please indicate how many)__	18.2% Other	4.5% in a resource room, with students from various classrooms
	13.6% in one classroom, with one teacher	9.1% No Answer

More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Assistant to ESL Specialist ... hallway ... in the hallway with students from many classrooms ... PE>

(36) Do you use more than one language in instruction?

40.9% Yes	54.5% No	4.5% No Answer

The average response was 1.6.

(37) Which language(s) do you use in instruction?

81.8% English	13.6% Armenian	0.0% Tagalog	9.1% No Answer
22.7% Spanish	9.1% Other	0.0% Korean	

More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: Farsi ... Arabic

(38) What are your instructional responsibilities?

77.3% English as a Second Language (ESL)	27.3% Other
54.5% tutoring in Math____Science____Social Studies____Other____	22.7% non-English language support-translation
	4.5% No Answer
27.3% non-English language support-reading/content areas	

More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: any other need the teacher has ... Language Arts, P.E. ... prepare dittos, bookkeeping, errands. ... dittos, etc. ... SDC .. . various jobs

(39) How often do you and your supervising teacher(s) meet to discuss students and/or instruction?

68.2% daily	9.1% Other	4.5% never	4.5% No Answer
13.6% weekly	4.5% monthly	0.0% quarterly	

More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: whenever needed ... as needed

(40) Are you included in site-based committees?

13.6% Yes	81.8% No	4.5% No Answer

The average response was 1.9.

(41) If yes, please indicate which type of committee you serve on:

LEP ... 1985-1988- DBAC ... School Site Committee ... School Improvement Committee

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(42) How satisfied are you with your job?

50.0% Excellent 36.4% Good 9.1% Fair 0.0% Poor 4.5% No Answer
The average response was 1.6.

(43) Please indicate your main reason for choosing to be a teaching assistant:

81.8% love to work with children
40.9% want to become a teacher
27.3% convenient hours; please specify_____
18.2% Other
4.5% No Answer
More than one answer accepted.

Other replies: finish work early and can attend to my home. ... I want to be home when my children are there. ... have a school-aged child; like vacations ... was a teacher before

(44) Do you feel that the teacher(s) you work with values your contribution in the classroom? Why or why not?

[3] yes ... Teachers let me know and ask for my help. ... Yes, as long as it is to the benefit of children. ... Yes, because I've always received good evaluations. ... I feel needed and appreciated ... Feel that teachers value her. ... Yes, she treats it as though we team teach. We discuss everything. ... teachers verbally positive ... Teachers appreciate all I do. ... Yes, because they realize that they cannot do it alone ... Yes, she makes it clear by what she says and how she treats me. ... Yes, because she gives me a great deal of independence and responsibility ... Yes, that is what I like about my teachers. We work together and I'm not just a person to do ditto things. ... Yes!!! The teachers I work for know I am studying to be a teacher. When possible, they allow me to work in small groups and allow me to experience new teaching methods (ex. touch math). ... Teachers let her know. ... The teacher I work with shows appreciation in every way she can. ... Yes, feel lucky to work with teachers that appreciate what she does ... Yes: we work as a team ... Yes, because they need all the help they can get because of the overcrowding so many children in one room.

(45) What concerns do you have in your instructional setting?

[3] None ... That students don't have good study habits ... Bilingual education should be strengthened/ ... I think that the school is doing a good job. ... students should learn more English to be able to transition. ... There isn't enough time to spend with each group of children. ... too much changing from class to class. ... I work in the hallway and do not have a "legitimate" classroom. ... The classroom being set up to accomodate for ESL instruction. ... that there is no program for students who do'nt qualify because they are too low for SDC ... class size ...
I would like for the District to provide more financial incentives for Assisstants who would like to become teachers. Perhaps the District could set up a program where they would provide financial support in exchange for a period where the employee would agree to return to the district at a reduced rate for a specified period of time (as loan repayment).
I would also like to hear more verbal support from the principal. Other assisstants in the district say that their principals never have anything nice to say to them.
... NO concerns- teacher is highly qualified ... Need training in ESL ... Not enough space in the classroom--furniture has to be moved ... not enough time to meet with students ... Sometimes I'm given more responsibility than an aide is required

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B

Models of Instruction Provided by Paraprofessionals

Model I:

School setting:
- Early-exit bilingual program
- Impacted school (over 90% LEP)
- Ethnic groups: predominantly Armenian and Hispanic
- Socio-economic status: lower/working class

Role of assistant:
- Parallel instruction with
- Parallel instruction with teacher
- Shared responsibility for LEP students

Curriculum:
- Primary language instruction and support
- ESL integrated through thematic curriculum

Personal Characteristics:
- Long-term commitment to language minority students (16 years as paraprofessional)
- bilingual (Spanish/English)
- involvement with parents and community
- deeper level of awareness of socio-political issues

Career Aspirations:
- no plans to enroll in teacher education program

Model II

School Setting:
- Immersion- ESL only
- 25% LEP population
- Ethnic group- primarily Korean
- Socio-economic status- middle to upper middle class

Role of Assistant:
- ESL Pull-Out program
- No primary language support
- total responsibility for LEP students

Curriculum:
- ESL taught solely by assistant
- Little or no supervision/direction from classroom teacher
- Closer adherence to district curriculum for ESL (use of Language Experience Approach and Transitional Reading Program)

Personal Characteristics:
- Long term commitment to education
- High degree of awareness of differential attitudes and instructional services provided for language minority students
- Monolingual

Career Aspirations:
- Currently enrolled in teacher education program

Model III

School setting:
- Immersion- ESL only
- 25% LEP
- Ethnic group- predominantly Hispanic
- Socio-economic status- working and middle class

Role of assistant:
- ESL Pull-Out program
- Tutoring in various subject areas
- No primary language support
- Total responsibility for LEP students

Curriculum:
- ESL taught soley by assistant
- No supervision/direction for instruction by classroom teacher
- "Loose" adherence to district curriculum (district supports Natural Approach)

Personal Characteristics:
- Long term commitment to language minority students (23 years as assistant)
- High level of involvement with parents and community
- Bilingual (Spanish/English)
- High degree of awareness of emotional and affective factors affecting students
- high degree of independence

Career Aspirations:
- No plans to complete teacher education program